

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact

Shannon N. Marshall (804) 864-7963

April 21, 2006

VDH 06-24

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES
TIMELY INFANT IMMUNIZATIONS**

National Infant Immunization Week is April 22-29

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) encourages parents and caregivers of infants to love them, protect them and immunize them. VDH is emphasizing the need to keep infants' immunizations up-to-date during National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW). Local health departments will sponsor activities throughout the week to increase awareness about the importance of timely infant immunizations and encourage better communication between parents, caregivers and healthcare providers.

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals from developing potentially serious diseases, they also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of disease.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 1 million 2-year-olds in the United States are not adequately immunized. Each day, 11,000 babies are born in the United States and will need to be immunized against 15 diseases before the age of 2.

"Immunizations are one of the most effective ways parents can protect their children from potentially deadly infectious diseases," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D, M.P.H. "National Infant Immunization Week should serve as a reminder for parents and caregivers to keep their children's immunizations on schedule."

Children require more than 80 percent of their vaccinations within the first 24 months of life to protect them against disease, disability and even death. Significant progress has been made in increasing Virginia's immunization rates for children younger than two years old. In Virginia, 81 percent of children 19 to 35 months of age have received appropriate immunizations.

"Parents and caregivers should not wait until their children prepare to enroll in school to begin thinking about immunizations," said Jim Farrell, director of VDH's Division of Immunization. "They should start thinking about immunizations as soon as their children are born. Make your children's immunizations a priority."

Parents and caregivers should check with their health care provider to make sure their infants' vaccinations are up-to-date, and get back on track if they have missed any vaccinations. For more information on immunizations and the CDC childhood immunization schedule, visit the VDH Division of Immunization's Web page at www.vdh.virginia.gov/imm.

###